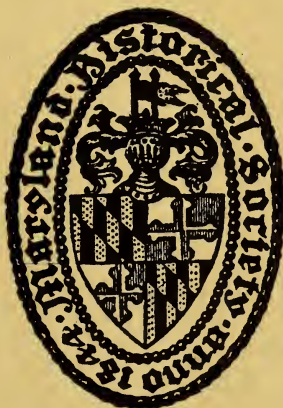


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"I give and bequeath to The Maryland Historical Society the sum of
.....*dollars."*

AN HISTORICAL IDENTIFICATION.

JOHN WILKES BOOTH—

WHAT BECAME OF HIM?

WILLIAM M. PEGRAM.

It would seem almost to be a work of supererogation to take up a matter of history which has been deemed long ago settled, beyond a question; but when facts involving a most important event are questioned, it becomes necessary that the public should have definite information concerning them, and by this means give the quietus to error, and substantiate truth.

From time to time, during the forty-eight years intervening since that fearful tragedy, which horrified the nation—the assassination of President Lincoln,—there have appeared numbers of articles in the press, expressing doubt as to the death of his assassin, John Wilkes Booth; many asserting that his capture or death never had been accomplished, and that he had actually eluded all plans made to that end, finally escaping arrest.

A letter by Mr. Powell Arnette, expressing such doubts aroused by reading *The Escape and Suicide of J. Wilkes Booth*, F. L. Bates, published in 1912, appeared in the “Baltimore Sun” under date of January 8th, 1913.

On reading this letter, I determined to reply to it, giving facts, within my own personal knowledge, which go to prove that the publication of *The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth* was the creation of a mind either utterly imaginative or grossly misinformed.

In my reply dated January 9, I stated:

“The body of John Wilkes Booth was brought to Baltimore on February 18th, 1869. It was taken to the establishment of Weaver, the undertaker, on Fayette Street near Gay, who

prepared it for burial, and then placed it in his own vault in Greenmount, where it remained until June 6th, when it was finally buried in the Booth lot, beside the monument erected to the memory of his illustrious father, Junius Brutus Booth.

"On the morning after the arrival of the body in Baltimore, Mr. Henry C. Wagner, of this city, and I viewed it, lying in its casket.

"The body had been buried under the Penitentiary in the old arsenal grounds at the navy yard in Washington, a plain gun box having been used as a coffin. On the underside of the box lid, had been placed with a marking ink the single word, "Booth," evidently in order to identify the remains should they ever be removed. Mr. Wagner and I looked at the body as it lay dressed in the suit of clothes in which he had been shot. On the right leg was a long cavalry boot, coming up to the knee. The left leg was disjointed both at the knee and ankle, the latter having been broken when he jumped from the box to the stage of the theatre after the shooting of Lincoln.

"It will be remembered that Dr. Mudd treated the broken ankle without knowing who his patient was. He cut the boot from the left leg and manufactured a shoe from the boot's foot, in which we saw the remains of the actual foot lying in the casket. It had become separated from the bones of the leg, and they also separated at the knee. The skin was still drawn tightly over the grinning skull, which showed the splendid teeth for which Booth was noted, there being only a single filling, which was identified by the dentist who did the work. The coal black hair which rolled back from the forehead had grown probably nearly a foot in length.

"The family fully identified the body as that of John Wilkes Booth, all doubts to the contrary notwithstanding.

"A very curious fact in connection with the body is worthy of mention here. A clergyman having a Northern charge, being in Baltimore at the time of the burial of the remains, was asked to officiate, and he complied with the request, but was not aware whose funeral it was until he reached the cemetery gate. His congregation on learning that he had buried

the remains of John Wilkes Booth were unwilling for him to return.¹

"Mr. Henry C. Wagner, of 1003 Cathedral Street, this city, will verify this statement in every respect."²

Mr. Arnette, still clinging to the romance which captured his fancy, replied on January 18 to my letter to "The Sun" asking,

"Why \$100,000 was offered as reward, and not one cent paid?"

With a determination to probe this matter to its fullest extent, by this means answer Mr. Arnette's questions, and settle the matter for all time, I addressed the State Department, at Washington, inquiring whether or not such a reward was ever offered, and if so, why it was not paid?

My letter to the State Department was referred to the War Department and from it I received information that:

"Reports and correspondence in connection with the above will be found in House Executive Documents Nos. 63 and 90, and House Report No. 99, of the 39th Congress, 1st Session, no copies of which are on hand in this Department available for distribution."

A letter from E. H. Connolly, Judge-Advocate General, was inclosed stating that:

The Act of Congress of July 28, 1866 (14 Stat. 341) en-

¹The clergyman alluded to above was the Rev. Fleming James, now deceased, who was spending a vacation in Baltimore, and on being refused the privilege of returning to his work in the North, remained in Baltimore, and was for some years Rector of St. Mark's Protestant Episcopal Church, on Lombard Street. It is hardly to be supposed that his former flock would have treated him thus harshly had there been any doubt that the funeral was in fact that of Mr. Booth.

²I have read the foregoing statement by Mr. William M. Pegram, with regard to our visit to Weaver's (the undertaker) in February, 1869, and there viewing the remains of John Wilkes Booth, just brought over from Washington, and I hereby certify that the said statement is absolutely correct in every particular.

(Signed) HENRY C. WAGNER.

Baltimore, March 1, 1913. [Mr. Wagner died on April 4, 1913]

titled, 'An Act to authorize the payment of the rewards offered by the President of the United States, and the officers of the War Department in April and May, 1865, for the capture of the assassins of the late President Abraham Lincoln, and Secretary of State, Hon. William H. Seward,' provided—

“ ‘That there be paid out of any moneys in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated in full satisfaction of all claims for the rewards offered by the President of the United States or by authority of the War Department, for the capture of the assassins of the late President Abraham Lincoln, and the Secretary of State, Hon. William H. Seward, the following sums to the following named persons, viz: For the capture of Payne, \$5000; for the capture of Atzerodt, \$25,000; for the capture of Booth and Herold, \$75,000.’

“It was further provided that the several sums should be paid to the several persons named in the Act, or in case of their death, to the persons who would be entitled to the same under the bounty laws of the United States in the case of a deceased soldier.

“The record of payment actually made under the above act would be found in the Treasury Department.”

On the 11th of February, I addressed the Treasury Department for the desired information, and received in reply from R. O. Bailey, Assistant Secretary, the information that:

“Congress, by Act of July 28, 1866 (14 Stat. 341-2) appropriated the following sums of money for division among 53 persons named in the act to receive a share of the rewards:

For the capture of Payne.....	\$ 5,000.
For the capture of Atzerodt.....	25,000.
For the capture of Booth and Herold..	75,000.

\$105,000.

“The names of the persons, with the amount paid to each, can be obtained from the volume of the statutes referred to, which may be consulted by you at one of the libraries of your city.”

I procured Volume 14 of the Statutes, and on pages 341 and 342, I find that the following rewards were paid for the capture of Booth and Herold. As Booth alone was the party in dispute, I make no note of the Payne and Atzerodt rewards.

E. J. Conger received \$15,000, LaFayette C. Baker received 3,750, Luther B. Barker received 3,000, Lieut. E. P. Doherty received 5,250, Jas. E. O'Bierne received 2,000, H. H. Wells received 1,000, Geo. Cottingham received 1,000, Alex. Lovett received 1,000, making a total of \$32,000.

Sergeant Boston Corbett (Booth's slayer), Sergeant Andrew Wendell, Corporals Charles Zemmer, Michael Unios, John Winter, John Waltz, Oliver Leupay, Michael Homesley, Privates John Meyers, John Ryan, William Bryne, Philip Hoyt, Martin Kelley, Henry Putnam, Frank McDaniel, Lewis Savage, Abraham Genay, Emery Parady, David Barker, William McQuade, John Millington, Fred. Dietz, Carl Steinbrugge, Joseph Zisgin, all of the 16th N. Y. Cavalry, each received \$1,653.84, and a fraction, making a total of \$43,000.

Add the two sums—Citizens, \$32,000, and Soldiers, 43,000, making a grand total of \$75,000, the amount offered by the Federal Government for the apprehension of Booth and Herold.

It is to be presumed that the Government would not have paid the above amounts without being assured of the identity of the parties killed or captured. That a cadaver such as I saw and have so particularly described, could have been manufactured, is preposterous. What object could have been obtained by it? Why should the name "Booth" have been placed *on the underside of the old gun case in which the body was first buried*, except for the purpose of avoiding erasure by contact with the earth, and thus preserving it for identification in the future, should occasion call for it?

I think the questions asked by Mr. Arnette have been fully answered, and not only must the conclusion be recognized by him, but his hope also be realized that the public will be satisfied, notwithstanding the publication entitled, *The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*.

